

OSA introduces a new conflicts of interest policy with *Biomedical Optics Express*: editorial

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Abstract: The Optical Society introduces a new Conflicts of Interest policy as a pilot program with *Biomedical Optics Express*.

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Awareness and proper management of potential conflicts of interest for authors, reviewers and editors is essential to OSA's mission to disseminate and archive optics and photonics knowledge. While [OSA's Guidelines Concerning Ethical Practices in the Publication of Scientific Research](#) address the obligations of authors, editors and reviewers from an ethical point of view, formal disclosures of conflicts of interest (including financial interests) – meanwhile well established for medical journals - have not yet been requested for papers published in OSA's journals.

After several months of discussion, the OSA Board of Editors has decided to introduce a new [Conflicts of Interest \(CoI\) policy](#) for OSA's journals that addresses this issue. For this purpose, the CoI statements of several other publishers have been reviewed to determine best practices and to compare the approach used in various disciplines. The new CoI policy for OSA Journals incorporates the relevant sections of the existing Ethical Guidelines document and elements from the statements of other publishers. The objective is to provide a publicly visible policy that gives OSA's expectations of authors, reviewers and editors with regards to conflicts of interest and to make the guidelines more visible during the submission and peer review processes.

OSA defines a conflict of interest as arising from any relationship authors, reviewers or editors have which interferes with, or could reasonably be perceived as interfering with, the full and objective presentation, peer review, editorial decision-making, or publication of a manuscript. Conflicts of interest can be financial or non-financial, professional or personal, and can arise in relation to an organization or an individual. OSA requires full disclosure by authors of all conflicts of interest relevant to a submitted manuscript, which is integral to the transparent reporting of research. By using a formalized [letter coding](#) for the various types of CoI, we tried to keep the efforts for the authors at minimum.

In a pilot phase, the new CoI policy will be implemented for *Biomedical Optics Express* (BOEx), starting in August 2016, where its acceptance will be evaluated and feedback for any modifications will be collected. BOEx was chosen as the first journal for testing the implementation because its editors, reviewers and authors, who also publish in medical journals, should be more familiar with the concept than those of other OSA journals. After the one-year pilot phase, the new CoI policy shall be implemented across all of OSA's journals.

We think that the small additional burden required to declare conflicts of interest in a formalized way may help with a better interpretation of published results and therefore is in the best interest of science. We are confident that the majority of our authors, reviewers, editors and readers share this view and accept and support the new CoI policy. We welcome your comments, suggestions and feedback at boemss@osa.org.

Christoph K. Hitzengerger, Editor-in-Chief